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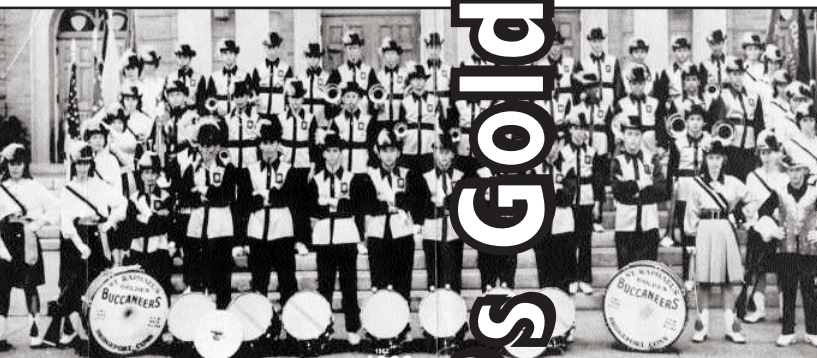
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by Cliff Richmond  
and Bill Mischik

The St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers junior corps was organized in the fall of 1958 as a coeducational competitive marching activity as part of St. Raphael's parish's CYO music program. The founder and original spiritual moderator was Father Louis A. DeProffio.

The Buccaneers were affiliated with both the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, appearing in those organizations' state and national championship competitions. They are the only Connecticut junior corps to have appeared on stage at Carnegie Hall.

Following an intensive winter and spring season of recruiting and practice -- the "rookie corps" rehearsed for 87 consecutive days and nights -- the Golden Buccaneers entered the Yankee Marching and Maneuvering Circuit, competing successfully against much older units and placing second in class A at the



St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers, 1962  
(photo from the collection of Bill Mischik).

1959 circuit championships.

James Donnelly of the nationally ranked St. Vincent's Cadets was the corps' original bugle arranger/instructor, assisted by Dave Mintel. Donnelly provided charts used in 1959 and 1960, including *War March of the Priests*, *The Best Things in Life Are Free*, *Italian Street Song*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Jamaica*, *Papa Loves Mambo*, *Red Sails in the Sunset* and *Vagabonds Song*, which were performed by a musical ensemble that numbered 39 brass and nine in the battery.

Earl Sturtze of the Connecticut Yankees senior corps was the original drum line arranger/instructor, and Arthur Forcier performed the duties of corps director and drill instructor. Warren MacDonald was business manager. Charles "Skipper"

# St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers

Gallant was named drum major, a position he held until 1968.

The Buccaneers received their first factory-made uniforms of black and gold in the spring of 1960. That season was spent primarily in the Yankee and Greater New York Circuits. The corps went undefeated in the Yankee Circuit, winning the class A championship in the fall while placing second at the Greater New York Circuit's title show.

Their inaugural "Festival of Music" field contest was held that year and the Buccaneers appeared at Yankee Stadium. The cadet corps, St. Raphael's Musketeers, was founded, with staff drawn from the big corps.

The off-season witnessed an almost complete staff turnover, as well as the loss of many of the original marching members. Coming on staff were Jack Sullivan on drill, Fred Cartwright writing for and teaching horns and Joseph Gaudette mentoring the drum line. Jack Bracken was hired as instructor for the 15-member all-girl color guard, the only section not to have lost any members in the mass departure.

All the new staff members were veterans of the Connecticut Yankees and Bridgeport Troopers senior corps. Warren MacDonald assumed the director's position.

The 1961 program of new music included Fred Cartwright arrangements of *Start of*

*Something Big*, *Pomp and Circumstance March*, *Misty* and *Somewhere Beyond the Sea*, performed by a horn line of 30 and a drum section that numbered nine.

The corps again competed primarily in the Yankee and Greater New York circuits, while

accepting several invitational contests, including that of the Garfield Cadets. The corps made its first trip to a national event, attending the VFW Championships in Miami, FL, where it placed 16th in prelims. Honors for 1961 included multiple victories in both circuits, a second place at the Greater New York Circuit's title show and a third-place finish at the Yankee.

The 1962 Buccaneers sported an enlarged horn line of 36, a drum line of 12 and an all-girl color guard of 18. New music included *Grenada*, *He, Macarena* and *Green Eyes*, all written by Cartwright. They were one of the first corps in the United States, and the first in New England, to field the new contra bass bugle, played by Dennis Banks.

St. Raphael's competed in the *Drum Corps News*-hosted mid-winter standstills in Boston, MA,

and New Haven, CT.

The summer season found the corps in Penn-Jersey Circuit shows and invitationals. A second tour to VFW Nationals in Minneapolis was undertaken, with contests along the way in Kenosha and Racine, WI.

Honors for 1962 included the Connecticut American Legion State Championship, a seventh place finish at the Penn-Jersey and a 13th place result at the VFW, four-tenths of a point and one position out of the night show.

There were new uniforms in store for 1963: black wool pullover vests with the letter "B" emblazoned on the left breast and gold satin blouses replacing the "praying angel" gold and black satin blouses of the past three years. The faithful all-girl color guard was replaced by an all-male section recruited from among the playing members, and the parish launched an all-girl corps, the Marionettes.

The Buccaneers' music for the new season included the theme from "Experiment in Terror" and *Novillero*. The corps appeared on stage at Carnegie Hall, participating in the *Drum Corps News* "Evening with the Corps" concert program. The Buccaneers again competed in the Greater New York and Penn-Jersey circuits. They also competed in the inaugural World Open Championship hosted by *Drum Corps News*.

Honors for 1963 included eight victories in the Greater New York Circuit, a third-place finish at the GNY title event and a seventh-place finals position at the World Open.

There was another huge personnel and management turnover in the off-season as more than half the veterans departed for greener pastures. A major draft of performers from the cadet corps and several veterans of the recently folded fire department junior corps came forward to fill the vacancies.

Joe Genero of Hawthorne Caballeros and Connecticut Hurricanes fame was brought on board as bugle instructor/arranger. He provided the corps with a completely new sound and a musical book that included *Blow Gabriel Blow*, *Out of Nowhere*, *Cry Me a River*, *How the West Was Won* and *The Shelter of Your Arms*.

Father Frank Dellillio became the corps' spiritual moderator. The inaugural camp weekend resulted in a completely new marching program learned in 72 hours.



St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers, July 23, 1966 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Bill Mischik).



The corps spent the summer of 1964 in the Greater New York and Penn-Jersey circuits and also returned to the World Open, held in the corps' hometown of Bridgeport. Honors included an undefeated season in Greater New York, including the circuit championship at season's end; a fourth-place finish at Penn-Jersey; and a 15th-place result at the World Open Prelims.

MacDonald retired as director at the end of the season and Pete Padua stepped up. Another substantial draft of Musketeers increased the corps' size to 39 horns, 14 drums and 17 color guard. New music included *High Society*, *On the Mall March* and *Sabre Dance*. Father Salvatore Zocco was appointed spiritual moderator.

St. Raphael's competed in the Penn-Jersey Circuit as well as in open and invitational contests and finals of the Bridgeport-hosted World Open. Honors for 1965 included a third-place finish at World Open Finals (the highest placement ever by a Connecticut junior unit in open competition) and third place at the Penn-Jersey Championship.

The corps took delivery of its first complete set of new bugles, a set from Getzen. In November, St. Raphael's baritone quartet traveled to Chicago and won the national championship of the All-American Association. The inaugural Winter Cotillion banquet was held in December.

New for 1966 were additions to the uniform -- gold sequin ambassadors sashes, a second rudimental bass drum soloist, a solo rifleman and an expanded contra bass bugle section of three. New music from Genero included *Fairest of the Fair March*, *Trumpet Blues* and *A Taste of Honey*.

The corps participated in *Drum Corps News'* "Evening with the Corps" concert, this time in Newark's Symphony Hall. The corps enjoyed its most successful season ever, winning several Penn-Jersey and invitational contests, placing well against the best corps in the East and repeating as finalists at the World Open, placing fifth in the night show.

In 1967, Al Richmond assisted longtime drum major Gallant. The Buccaneers were brought up to end strength of 39 horns, 16 drums and 18 color guard by the assimilating the remaining cadet corps members into the big corps. Members from two recently disbanded area units were also welcomed into the fold.

Ray Ludee, drum line arranger/instructor for the Connecticut Hurricanes, came on board at St. Raphael's, and Genero's new charts for 1967 included "Man of La Mancha" overture and *The Impossible Dream*.

During the 1967 field competition season, St. Raphael's Buccaneers defeated many regional powers and competed favorably with the best of the best. Placing well in open and invitational contests, the corps traveled to Boston for the annual World Open and American Legion Nationals.

Honors for 1967 included fifth place at World Open Finals and an 11th-place finish at the American Legion Prelims.

In 1968, the entire drum corps world was



St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers, July 4, 1967 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Bill Mischik).

hit hard by the military draft to support the war in Vietnam and St. Raphael's was not spared. The 1968 edition was smaller as a result of age-outs, the draft and loss of the cadet corps. Almost two-thirds of the 1967 unit was gone and many replacements come from out-of-towners, know later as "imports."

A new director, Anthony Carosielli, took over the corps for what was the St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers' final season. New music included the theme from the movie "Mutiny on the Bounty," *Give Me Your Tired and Poor/America* medley and *Carmen Suite*.

The placements and scores in the opening contests were disappointing and resulted in mass defections among the imports. A mid-season rewrite camp was held to rebuild the program, but the end result was a further loss of ground competitively and, sadly, the corps withdrew from competition. The units' "final finish line" was crossed at a contest in Kingston, NY. Stetson Richmond recorded the corps on opening night in Bridgeport at their own (final) hosted contest.

The last performance as St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers was at a standstill at the Stratford, CT, airport. All 21 horns, nine drums and 10 color guard members, fronted by drum major Gallant, marched into history. The final command given upon conclusion of the performance: "Well, that's it."

#### **Golden Buccaneers, 1969-1975**

In the fall 1969, the drum corps program at St. Raphael's Church was resurrected in the form of a coed unit (the Marionettes also folded in 1968) to be called the Golden Buccaneers. The corps entered the Yankee Circuit and the rebuilding process began.

Over the next six years, the unit enjoyed success in local, state and regional competition, drawing a basically local membership. In 1975, declining numbers forced the corps into a merger with the St. Aeden's Emerald Cadets of New Haven, CT. The Emerald Buccaneers competed for what turned out to be their only season and concluded their run with an appearance at the CYO Nationals in Boston.

Many alumni from all the years of the St. Raphael's drum corps programs went on to march with senior units such as the Connecticut Hurricanes, New York Skyliners and Hawthorne Caballeros. Many became instructors and judges, and at the time of this writing in May 2003, several are still active in the alumni corps arena, performing with the Hawthorne Caballeros and New York

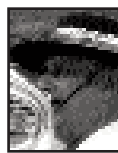
Skyliners alumni corps.

And finally, a word of thanks: Each and every member from all the corps of the old glory days of Bridgeport junior drum corps owes every corps director, instructor, quartermaster and chaperone a debt they can never possibly repay. Those leaders, underpaid and in many cases not paid at all, took a bunch of city kids off the streets, taught them to march and play bugles and drums, took them to contests in faraway places they would never have seen

otherwise and instilled a form of competitive spirit and discipline that they would not have gotten anywhere else. Thanks a million.



St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers, June 22, 1968 (photo by Moe Knox from the collection of Bill Mischik).



*Cliff Richmond was a member of the St. Raphael's Golden Buccaneers from 1958-1967. He was the musical supervisor for Lowry AFB Drum and Bugle Corps. He is a former member of the Hawthorne Caballeros and Yankee Rebels Alumni Corps.*

*Richmond is a charter member of the Hawthorne Caballeros Alumni Corps and has served as a marching/visual judge for the Mountain States and Drum Corps United Kingdom associations. He was a staff writer for Drum Corps News from 1969-1982.*

*Richmond retired from the Air Force in 1989 and graduated from Wesley College in 1996. He has been a marching/visual instructor for Caesar Rodney High School in Camden, DE, since 1992 and is currently employed by the Department of Corrections in Delaware. He has three children and four grandchildren.*



*Bill Mischik marched with St. Raphael's Musketeers and Golden Buccaneers from 1962-1968, while his sister Pat was in the cross-town rival, the Bridgeport P.A.L. Cadets.*

*Bill's father, Emil, spent many years with St. Raphael's and the Emerald Buccaneers and became assistant director in the 1970s. His other sister, Judy, was also in the Buccaneers in 1974.*

*The rivalry continues to this day at family reunions, which include Pat's husband, Bob, a former P.A.L. Cadet.*

*Bill was employed as a general foreman for Robertshaw Controls for 18 years and owned his own retail sports collectable store. He is currently the marketing director for WCCG. He has two daughters, Katie, 15, and Julie, 18, and is engaged to his fiancée, Robin.*